



Sarah Wilkins

Director for Education and Early Help

Email: swilkins@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Tel: 01905 846082

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Education and Early Help News Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you enjoyed a break last week. Following on from Monday's statement by the Prime Minister, outlining the roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions, we have met with colleagues and phase leads throughout the week to consider the proposals, support and logistical issues regarding the testing arrangements for staff and children in order that we can assist you in preparation for the changes from 8 March. My sense is that we all hopeful and positive about getting all children back into school but recognise the careful planning and communication that this requires.

We have included information and clarification on the testing of pupils and students in today's bulletin. In addition, please also find links to a series of helpful guides on rapid testing which include a general overview and how to guides on rapid testing on site (ATS) and at home.

WCC have recruited to a support pool of testing operative staff that are being prioritised to support the education return. We are responding to requests from schools to support with staffing ready for return testing and the transition to testing at home.

Whilst I know your time and efforts are in planning for this return please can I draw your attention to the final section of the bulletin from page 9. There is free training that I would encourage you to promote for all staff and parent and carers, along with a request to get involved with the design of future training, a reminder about access to sanitary products for schools and settings and with Easter being the next milestone an opportunity for schools to access funding to support children and families.

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Risk assessment – reminder to review

In January we wrote to schools to request you conduct a review of your risk assessments in light of the new guidance and the national restrictions introduced. We circulated a checklist which we will now review with Public Health and reissue early next week to reflect any changes; we do not anticipate major changes but will include, for example, the introduction of home testing. Updated guidance from DfE in February reminds all schools to review their risk assessments in preparation for the return of all pupils.

If **any school, academy or maintained**, identifies as a part of their risk assessment review a measure that is out of their ability or control to implement as a further preventative measure (including procedures, people, places / premises) or is causing you problems, please contact us so that we can work with you, and include the DfE where relevant, to resolve them in so far as we are able.

Education Secretary's statement on coronavirus and return to schools

On Wednesday 24 February, the Education Secretary, Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, gave a statement on coronavirus, provided an update on the return of schools and announced further elements of the recovery support package to help children and young people catch up on missed learning and development.

This will be supported with a new £700 million package for England which includes:

- a new one-off £302 million recovery premium for state primary and secondary schools. This builds on the pupil premium to further support pupils who need it most. The average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra.
- £200 million (from the £300 million announced by the Prime Minister in January to expand our successful tutoring programmes) will be available to fund an £83 million expansion of the national tutoring programme for primary and secondary schools, a £102 million extension of the 16-19 Tuition Fund for a further year; and £18 million funding to support language development in early years.
- £200 million (including the final £100 million from the Prime Minister's announcement) will be available to secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs but the government is suggesting they may want to initially target incoming year seven pupils.
- a range of online resources will be available for all teachers and pupils, provided by Oak National Academy starting from the summer term and throughout the summer holidays.

The Department for Education has also updated the following guidance to reflect the changes announced by the Prime Minister on the wider reopening of schools and colleges from 8 March:

- Coronavirus recovery premium
- Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus outbreak
- Assessment processes for selective schools' admissions
- Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus outbreak
- What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges
- Parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus outbreak

[Read the announcement on the new education recovery package in full](#)

The DfE has also published an [open letter from Education Secretary Gavin Williamson to parents, carers and guardians](#) about the decision to lift restrictions on education from 8 March and on the asymptomatic testing programme and safety measures.

Teacher assessed grades for students

Yesterday, Thursday 25 February, the Education Secretary announced that students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught.

In a press release issued by the DfE they outlined how fairness and flexibility are at the heart of the Government's plans to ensure young people get to their next stage of education or training. Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests. No algorithm will be used.

Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments.

Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week of 9 August – moved forward from the week of the 23 August. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance of accessing a place.

To support teachers in making their judgements, exam boards will provide detailed guidance before the end of the spring term.

Staff across education have been going above and beyond to support young people through the pandemic, and the guidance published by boards will be designed to minimise any additional burden this year's awarding process may place in teachers and staff.

Students studying vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) that are often taught alongside GCSEs and A levels on one or two year courses, and used for university or college places, will also receive grades assessed by teachers rather than sitting exams.

Exams and assessments will continue in VTQs where they are needed for students to demonstrate the necessary professional standard in an occupation.

Schools, colleges and other educational settings will conduct multiple checks – such as checking consistency of judgements across teachers and that the correct processes were followed - to ensure as much fairness as possible.

At the same time, exam boards will conduct their own checks, through a combination of random sampling and more targeted scrutiny where they identify cause for concern. Every student will have the right to appeal their grade.

The proposals being taken forward were supported in responses to the department and Ofqual's largest ever consultation, with over 100,000 responses of which just over half (52%) came from pupils.

[Read the announcement on teacher assessed grades for students in full](#)

Latest new and updated DfE guidance

22 February 2021

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Keeping children safe from abuse and harm](#)

Advice for parents and carers about the main risks children may be particularly vulnerable to at this time and information about available help and support has been updated to add extra links to support to help keep children safe.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): keeping children safe online](#)

Advice and guidance to help parents and carers to keep children safe online during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has been updated to include links to extra resources added to help keep children safe from online harm.

[Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

Added the 'Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance' which explains the actions schools will need to take from 8 March. Removed 'What to do if a pupil is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)' as this information is now in the operational guidance.

[Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

They have withdrawn the 'Education and childcare settings: national lockdown from 5 January 2021' guidance and transferred relevant sections into the updated 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance.

[Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

Added the 'Further education coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance' which explains the actions FE colleges and providers will need to take from 8 March.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#)

Updated sections on possible restrictions for primary schools, secondary schools and further education. Added further detail for special schools, special post-16 institutions and alternative provision. Added section for higher education. Clarified when the guiding principles of the contingency framework apply.

[Special schools and other specialist settings: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Added 'Additional operational guidance for special schools, special post-16 institutions and alternative provision'. Removed 'Guidance for special schools, specialist post-16 providers and alternative provision during the national lockdown' and 'Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings'.

23 February 2021

[Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Guidance updated to outline who can attend out-of-school settings and what actions providers will need to take from 8 March. Added new sections on advice for pregnant staff members and engaging in asymptomatic testing.

24 February 2021

[Catch-up premium: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Guidance updated to remove document for NELI (Nuffield early language intervention) programme - the recruitment phase for this programme has now ended.

25 February 2021

[Awarding qualifications in summer 2021](#)

New guidance on what schools, colleges and students need to know about the arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS and A levels, VTQs and other qualifications in summer 2021 has been published. This guidance outlines the process for awarding grades in 2021 based on teacher assessments. It covers the: arrangements for undertaking assessments; quality assurance and appeals processes; awarding process for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): school and college performance measures](#)

Guidance has been updated to confirm the 2020 to 2021 accountability position.

[Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Updated to show eligible apprentices can now start their EPA before they achieve their functional skills qualifications, if they have been prevented from doing so by coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

COVID testing of pupils and students

A number of schools and colleges have asked whether they can start testing pupils and students the week before Monday 8 March to help manage the flow of pupils and students through on-site assisted test sites (ATS).

Schools and colleges may start testing students and pupils before Monday 8 March if they would like to do so. This is voluntary and at the discretion of each school or college. Asymptomatic testing is an important tool for helping to break the chains of transmission of the virus and so students and pupils may go to school or college specifically for a test before Monday 8 March if their school or college offers to test them.

If a school or college chooses to start testing before Monday 8 March, they should still follow the schools operational guidance or further education guidance.

Students must maintain social distance and must go home after their test result if the test is before Monday 8 March.

Students and pupils will still need to do 3 tests on-site (ATS), each 3 to 5 days apart, before moving to home-testing. Schools and colleges should not start home testing students and pupils before the week beginning Monday 15 March.

Schools and colleges will need to consider the transport implications of testing before Monday 8 March.

Testing if previously tested positive

Please note the DfE have confirmed: “Those who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days are exempt from taking an LFD or PCR test unless they are symptomatic for COVID-19. In which case they should arrange for a PCR test and self-isolate. However, if anyone who has tested positive within 90 days chooses to take an LFD test, and it tests positive, they should self-isolate for 10 days.”

LFD testing and PCR testing

Please note: Where an LFD test is taken on site at a school testing site, a community testing site or a pharmacy and the test is positive, this result is recorded directly to national NHS Test & Trace which triggers the legal duty for 10 days self-isolation for the case and their household and a confirmatory PCR test is NOT required.

Where LFD testing is undertaken at home and is positive, a confirmatory PCR test IS still required. Please do not attend setting/school, stay at home and self-isolate (and household). If the PCR test result does come back negative, self-isolation can cease and you may return to setting/school.

Schools and colleges document sharing platform for rapid testing

A number of documents have been added/updated on the schools and colleges document sharing platform for rapid testing including:

[‘Why, Who, What and When’: Rapid Testing for Secondary Schools and Colleges in March 2021](#)

This document (the orange guide) provides an overview of the testing journey for secondary schools and colleges from March 2021 onwards.

[‘How To’ Guide: Rapid Testing on-site \(ATS\) in Secondary Schools and Colleges](#)

This document (the green guide) sets out how to set up an Asymptomatic Test Site (ATS) in your secondary school or college. This is required for when your pupils and students first return in March 2021.

[‘How to Guide’: Rapid Testing of Education Staff and Secondary Age Pupils at Home \(Self-Test\)](#)

This document (the blue guide) sets out how to test your staff and students using test at home kits. Before transitioning your secondary aged pupils and students to testing at home, you should have set up an ATS and tested them 3 times on site.

For more information and to access the full range of documents please access the [schools and colleges document sharing platform for rapid testing](#)

COVID-19 data for education providers

The latest data report on COVID-19 cases by district in Worcestershire is available to view online.

[View latest data report on COVID-19 cases in Worcestershire](#)

The breakdown on the number of situations by phase and by district as at 25 February 2021 were:

8	Current Situations
2	Schools
35	Staff Affected
113	Pupils Affected
3	Bubbles Collapsed
4	Partial Bubbles Collapsed
1	Outbreaks

Summary by Phase	Pupils		Staff	
Phase	Number of Situations	Number of Pupils Isolating	Number of Situations	Number of Staff Isolating
Further Education	0	0	0	0
High/Secondary	1	3	0	0
Middle	1	16	1	4
No phase recorded	6	94	7	31
Primary/First	0	0	0	0
Special	0	0	0	0
Total	8	113	8	35

Summary by District	Pupils		Staff		Bubbles		
Phase	Number of Situations	Number of Pupils Isolating	Number of Situations	Number of Staff Isolating	Bubbles Collapsed	Partial Bubbles Collapsed	Outbreaks
Bromsgrove	1	15	1	4	0	1	0
Malvern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Recorded	3	34	3	9	1	2	0
Redditch	1	5	1	1	1	0	0
Worcester	1	3	0	0	0	1	0
Wychavon	1	16	2	5	1	0	0
Wyre Forest	1	40	1	16	0	0	1
Total	8	113	8	35	3	4	1

Psychological First Aid training

On Monday 22 February, Public Health England (PHE) launched a new online Psychological First Aid (PFA) training course on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by coronavirus, or other emergencies or crisis situations.

The course will equip those completing the training to better identify children that are in distress and provide support to help them feel safe, connected and able to take steps to help themselves. Prior knowledge or experience is not required as this introductory course will teach you the key principles of giving PFA to children and young people in crisis situations.

The course is free and available for all frontline workers such as teachers, health and social workers, charity and community volunteers and anyone who cares for or is regularly in contact with children and young people aged up to 25, including parents and caregivers.

It takes about three hours to complete (split into three sessions that the learner can complete at their own pace) and no previous qualifications are required.

On completion, participants will have an understanding of what Psychological First Aid is, be able to identify who would benefit from support and how best to give help across the different age groups and also for those who might need extra support because of different needs.

[Sign-up for the training on the Future Learn website](#)

Take part in Mind's survey into mental health and secondary schools

Mind want to hear from staff working in secondary schools in England as part of **Educating Mental Health: Mind's inquiry into mental health in schools**. Their [survey](#) will take **15-20 minutes** to complete and closes on **31 March 2021**. To thank you for taking part in the survey, they are giving you the opportunity to enter into a free prize draw for the chance to win a £50 Amazon voucher.

They're interested in hearing about your experience of working with children and young people throughout secondary school – from year 7 to 11, plus sixth form. Your answers will inform their recommendations to the UK Government on how to ensure school staff have the support they need to enable children and young people to access effective mental health care.

Mind will be publishing our findings and recommendations to the UK Government later this year and we can share the full results of the survey with you, if you provide your email address.

Help shape future training for educational and childcare providers

Worcestershire Children First are working collaboratively with St Richards Hospice, KEMP Hospice and Primrose Hospice to create training for educational and childcare providers. The general focus is on supporting professionals within these settings with responding to bereavement, specifically in the immediate days and months following a significant death in the school community. However, we are keen to tailor the training to the needs of educational and childcare providers in Worcestershire and have created a survey which will support us in developing this training.

[Complete survey and help shape future training](#)

Acivico takes over the Worcestershire schools contract

As you will now be aware, Acivico Group has been appointed to take over the Worcestershire County Council school services contract previously run by Place Partnership Ltd with effect from 1st April 2020. Its appointment follows the completion of an extensive due diligence process.

Acivico is a Birmingham based multi-disciplinary consultancy practice which employs 130 people. It has extensive experience of supporting organisations in the educational sector and manages statutory services, repair and maintenance, and even capital works for a large number of schools, colleges and universities across the wider West Midlands region.

From a school's perspective, the day-to-day operations and support provided will continue. Subject to the successful completion of TUPE, Lexie Stobie and Neil Morris will be your ongoing contacts. They will continue to be home based as they have been under the Place Partnership contract. Schools will have access to a wider range of services and expertise which the Acivico team provides.

If you have any further questions, please contact Lexie or Neil in the normal way or Acivico via marketing@acivicogroup.co.uk. You can also learn more about Acivico Group at www.acivicogroup.co.uk

A reminder that schools need to expressly give permission to transfer compliance data. If you haven't already done so and if you are happy for Worcestershire County Council to receive a copy of your compliance data, can I please ask you to respond to propertyredesign@worcestershire.gov.uk with a statement to the effect of "We are happy to approve the County Council retaining a copy of our compliance data".

Ready, Steady, Worcestershire: Easter 2021 expression of interest

We are inviting expressions of interest for funding for the Ready, Steady, Worcestershire Easter holiday activity and food programme.

Please note this programme is being funded via the Department for Education's Holiday Activity and Food grant. Whilst this programme ideally looks for face to face activities with provision of an accompanying meal, it is recognised flexibility will again be required over the Easter period due to Covid-19 restrictions. Please also be mindful this particular fund has a primary focus on provision to Free School Meal children with flexibility of a maximum of 15% to reach the 'Just About Managing' group.

We welcome interest from individual organisations and collaborative expressions of interest from partners who have linked up to enable a complete activity and meal offering. If you require linking to a partner to put together a delivery package of support, we ask you about this within the form.

We will be required to report back to the DfE on the outcomes of our Easter programme and therefore if your expression of interest results in a funding award, you will be required to provide data on the outcomes of your Easter project. Details of this will follow at a later date.

If you have any questions on applying for funding for Easter, please contact Louise Butler via email at lbutler@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk or call 01905 843 908. **The deadline is Tuesday 2 March with decisions to be communicated w/c 8 March.**

[RSW Easter 2021 Holiday Activity and Food Funding – expression of interest](#)

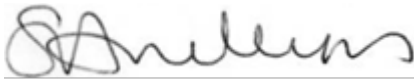
Period Poverty Scheme

phs Direct are working with the DfE on their Period Poverty Scheme again this year, supplying free sanitary products for girls who would struggle being at school during their period for lack of them. Did you claim your budget last year? They have allocated you a new budget for this year and if you haven't already ordered they are waiting for you to place your order. The scheme runs January to December, and it would be a shame to lose the budget.

They have sent the link previously, but if it hasn't gone to the right person in your setting please get in touch via the details below to confirm the correct person and the email address you want them to use and they will send out the link straight away. Once you click on the link it will ask you to create a password and will then take you to the page to begin spending your budget. Please note the link is time sensitive and the email cannot be passed on to another because this will invalidate the link.

You do not need to spend all your budget in one go and please note that there is no longer VAT on sanitary products. Here is a link to the phs Direct website with extra information and printable posters for you to use: <https://www.phs.co.uk/periodequalitydfe/>. If you need any further information or are having problems accessing your budget, please contact Jill Powell on 07828 154222 or email jillpowell@phs.co.uk

Best regards,



Sarah Wilkins
Director for Education and Early Help

